

don't call it a daydream by TolkienGirl

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Summary: Lately, he's been thinking about other dimensions. (Steve, post S2, gen and light Stancy angst.)

don't call it a daydream

Lately, he's been thinking about other dimensions.

See, if there are other alternate worlds—well, do all of them have to be awful?

"It doesn't *work* that way," Dustin says emphatically, when asked. Well, not *asked* exactly. Steve doesn't have to be direct; he can just turn a conversation like that. He's still got it. (What *it* is, he's not sure.)

Lucas flips his hand, palm-up, palm-down. "See? It's like...another side. But we're only on one side."

"Yeah." Dustin's lisp is mostly gone, but sometimes it comes back when he's excited. "There is just no science supporting the theory that there's copies of us in other dimensions, even if there's more than just the Upside Down."

"Doppelgangers aren't real," Lucas clarifies.

"Science isn't my strong suit, nerds," Steve says. Not without affection, but these little dicks know it, so he doesn't have to be nice to them.

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Ok, so science isn't on his side. But who is?

The bruises go down. His jaw aches, but in a month, he barely notices it anymore.

Everything goes away, and it's not like bruises are the kind of thing you keep.

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In Steve's alternate dimension, the pieces come together differently. The kids still end up there, jostling their way into his periphery, with their uncynical awe, and their stupid (helpful) advice, and their geek-

knowledge.

He doesn't bother fixing his parents, in this dream world. Truth is, he wouldn't know where to start. Wouldn't know what that would look like.

But he's free of school, free of the lectures and the disappointment and the empty house.

Most importantly, of course, Nancy's there. Nancy's his. Or he is hers.

Is that any surprise?

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He's picked up bits and pieces about Eleven—Jane—from the others. Basically she's psychic or moves shit with her mind, or both, and she's all-powerful if you listen to Dustin, and she saves the world, if you listen to Lucas, and she's *absolute, total perfection* if you let Mike talk about her for five seconds.

Eleven has the power to go between dimensions.

Steve can't really bring himself to ask her any questions.

Anyway, he's pretty sure his world isn't one you can get to.

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Doesn't mean he doesn't think about it.

Doesn't mean he doesn't inhabit it in the moments before he sleeps. Nancy left her fingerprints on everything. On him, most of all.

There are bigger problems than his love life.

Everything's bigger than his love life, at the moment. It doesn't exist, and he isn't sure if it even should. He's eighteen, he should be caring about something else.

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"I don't know."

"What don't you know?"

Dustin has his face sandwiched between his (grubby) hands. He's thinking. "Doppelgangers," he says. "Who knows. Could be a thing."

"Yeah, maybe." Steve flicks at a stain on the knee of his jeans. All his jeans have dirt on them, these days. "But it wouldn't be *us*, would it?"

And he closes the gate to his own alternate dimension just like that.